



The Established Heart

God's Word and Wisdom for Pastors

December 2008

Insecure Leaders are overly self-conscious

By Walker Schurz

Leadership is all about serving others for their benefit. When God chose us for a leadership task, He was thinking about someone else. It is so unfortunate that personal insecurities in the heart of a leader taint their judgment and drive them to do things and make decisions for their own self-interest, rather than the benefit of others.

If our identities are tied up in the success of ministry, we will live a very unstable life. Much of ministry success is determined by the response of others. We see many prophets of the Old Covenant who were faithful to give what God told them, yet saw very little change in the lives of those they served. Jesus gave us a great example of someone who was free to speak the truth and obey the will of His Father, because He did not seek the approval of others.

In our leadership, we must be more God-conscious and less self-conscious. That is, we must interpret events and actions in the light of what God thinks about this, rather than how this makes me look. Paul said that his impressive pedigree as a Jew was no longer important to him:

I once thought all these things were so very important, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the priceless gain of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I may have Christ. Philippians 3:7-8

Let us keep our eyes on Jesus and our heart consumed with following His plan of helping others. How that pursuit makes us look must be irrelevant to a mature leader.

Insecure leaders place too much attention on title and recognition

The New Testament lists ministry offices and people are mentioned as being evangelists, prophets, apostles and other titles that describe their function in the body of Christ. God certainly wants each and every one of us to find our place in the body of Christ and for some that will mean being used by God in a ministry office. The problem is not the title, but the love of the title and the perks that may come with it.

Jesus made it clear that the Pharisees' ministry agenda was to be noticed by others. He went on to show that because of the motives of their hearts, they did foolish things.

They do everything so that people will see them. Look at the straps with scripture verses on them which they wear on their foreheads and arms, and notice how large they are! Notice also how long are the tassels on their cloaks! They love the best places at the feasts and reserved seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted with respect in the market places and be called 'Teacher' Matthew 23:5-7

Notice that the problem was not the title or recognition, but their love of these things. This love based on insecurity drove them to do works that would be seen of men.

How do you feel when you are not honoured in a way that you think you should be? Are you easily offended by slip ups in protocol and seating that causes you to not to be treated well? If your answers are yes, you may be suffering from the leadership-threatening condition of insecurity.

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The Blind Spot

By John C. Maxwell

I have almost died on several occasions. I'd like to blame these near-death experiences on others, but I suppose they might have something to do with me. Let me explain...

Anyone who has driven for a length of time in Atlanta can testify to the horrors of its traffic situation. I'm sure other cities can make the claim of worst traffic in America, but I can't imagine anyplace worse than Atlanta. To complicate the problem, I wouldn't describe myself as a particularly patient person. In fact, my wife might describe me as downright impatient—and she would probably be right.

When in traffic, I've always subscribed to the bob-and-weave philosophy. If rampant lane changing can save me a car length or two, then I'll switch lanes like Liz Taylor switches husbands.

Unfortunately, there have been a few instances when I've not been diligent in checking my blind spot when shifting lanes. And, let me tell you, nothing jolts a person like the angry honking of a car horn only a few inches to his left or right! Thankfully, I've been able to survive without crashing or receiving anything worse than a friendly wave of the middle finger from a fellow driver. Since my blind spot has nearly caused my demise several times, I now pay extra attention to it. I double and triple confirm no cars are there before I merge into another lane.

Blind spots can wreck a leader's journey. In this edition of LW, I would like illustrate one of the most common blind spots I have observed in leaders. Next edition, I'll explore a second customary blind spot faced by leaders, and in each lesson, I'll give you advice for avoiding the dangers of the blind spot.

THE BLIND SPOT

The Blind Spot – *An area in the lives of people in which they continually do not see themselves or their situation realistically. This unawareness often causes great damage to the people and those around them*

WHY WE ARE BLIND – A SINGULAR PERSPECTIVE

Most every leader has a blind spot, in fact, all probably do. We are trapped in our own perspectives, unable to see the world completely from another person's point of view. We are absorbed in our world, caught in our present circumstances, consumed by selfish thoughts, and confined by our narrow experiences.

To illustrate, consider King George III of England's journal entry on July 4, 1776: "Nothing happened today." Of course, unbeknownst to King George, the American Declaration of Independence had been issued that day, and it would change the course of history.

One reason for our singular perspective can be attributed to our self-perception, or attitude toward self. As I wrote in the Lens Principle: who we are determines how we see others. A naïve optimist may be blind to the less-than-ideal intentions of those around them. Oppositely, an eternal pessimist may be blind to the kindness of a co-worker, instead suspecting ulterior motives.

A second cause of singular perspective comes from our tendency to judge ourselves based on intentions, while judging others by their actions. Such a bias allows us to cut ourselves slack and to justify our actions, because, after all, we meant well. However, since we aren't able to see the motives of others, we evaluate them solely by their actions. We attribute shortcomings in their behavior to shortfalls in character without regard for their present circumstances, mood, or emotional frame of mind.

We are fully aware of our history, but ignorant of the background of others. For this reason, context is the third and final cause of a blinding singular perspective. Decisions we take make perfect sense to us given our beliefs and experiences, but they may surprise others who are not as familiar with us. On the other hand, since we don't know the particulars of another person's childhood, past relationships, or prior involvements, we often have trouble conceiving why the person acts the way he or she does.

CHECKING YOUR BLIND SPOT - OPENING UP TO THE PERSPECTIVES OF OTHERS

As trite as it may sound, putting yourself in another person's shoes does open you to their perspective. To broaden your limited perspective, try to envision their opinions and feelings. Attempt to be aware of their motives and the values they hold dear.

Leaders avoid the blind spot of singular perspective when they seek to understand before seeking to be understood. As I wrote in *Winning with People*, "The entire world, with one small exception, is composed of others." Followers are focused inwardly, and they wonder, "How will this affect me?" Conversely, leaders are focused outwardly, and they ask, "How will this affect others?"

Finally, leaders may avoid the blind spot of singular perspective by examining themselves before casting blame on others. As Jesus of Nazareth taught:

Don't pick on people, jump on their failures, or criticize their faults— unless, of course, you want the same treatment. That critical spirit has a way of boomeranging. It's easy to see a smudge on your neighbor's face and be oblivious to the ugly sneer on your own. Matthew 7:1-3 🌿



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Insecure Leaders are overly self-conscious

From front page

Paul did not allow how others treated him to keep him from serving them or to keep him from having a good attitude.

This is now the third time that I am ready to come visit you and I will not make any demands on you. It is you I want, not your money. After all, the children should not have to provide for their parents but the parent should provide for their children. I will be glad to spend all I have and myself as well, in order to help you. Will you love me less because I loved you much? 2 Corinthians 12: 14 - 15

While honouring those that we should is a truly Biblical concept, we should seek the honour that comes from above, not that which comes from people. Some of the greatest men of God who influenced my life were those who always deflected praise back to Jesus and made others look good rather than themselves.

I believe that as leaders, we can find our self-worth from our identity as a child of God, not from whatever assignment we may have at the present time. This will free us to take risks and to accomplish what God has given us to do during our time here on earth. May you find the freedom and joy of being a secure and fruitful leader for years to come. 🌿



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working TOGETHER 2

By Steve McMichael

Last time we looked at working together, we began by talking about the planning stage which happens before you recruit others to help solve a problem or take on a ministry opportunity. Last time we looked at these three steps in planning:

1. Define the problem or opportunity you need help with.
2. Find the person who is right for the job.
3. Plan out what that individual will need to begin.

So we have planned and know what needs to be done. We have the right person and resource in mind for success. Now we are ready to meet with the person and try to enlist them in the work that needs to done.

As you meet with your prospective help, now is the time to communicate clearly. As the leader, you need to explain exactly what needs to be done. Many times we expect people to know our thoughts. That is unfair and really, unreasonable of us. There is a need for explanation in detail. When a member of your church or staff understands the task that is before them, they are already half way to victory.

With the instruction there needs to be an explanation of why this task is important and how it fits in the big picture. When people know why their job is important it is so much easier to do it well and when they understand the place their position holds in the overall church, they know who to talk to if there are problems. A person who understands the importance and placement of

what they are doing are on a path that will equip them not only to serve, but to help lead as well.

With the details of the task, a time frame should also be given. Your disappointment and their sense of failure can be avoided many times simply by agreeing on a time schedule before the person begins the task that is before them.

A final note on the communication process should include to whom they can ask questions. If you have a department head, associate, or another leader that this person will answer to, then they should know how to contact this person. Church, after all, is not primarily about tasks, it is about people. Knowing those you labour among is so important and the relationships that volunteers develop are one of the strongest motivating factors that keep them serving in the church.

Now you have planned and communicated. The final step to the cycle of togetherness is to evaluate. Evaluation is vital, but many times overlooked. But workers are more valuable than the work they do. We must value and care for them. To evaluate their work in a loving way will help them feel fulfilled today and improve their tomorrow.

Some may think of evaluation in a negative way. But it can be a time to celebrate, learn and improve. So here are some questions to help you through the evaluation process. Remember that love is our primary commandment and the person you are talking to is valuable to the work.

1. What was our plan? Review what you originally planned and communicated.
2. What actually happened? This may be a time of celebration. Even if the project was not 100% effective, was it 80%? Celebrate what you can.
3. What was the best part for you (the staff or volunteer)? No ministry is done without affecting the soul. Let them share what was best for them.
4. What do you see as something that can be done better now that you have done this? This may lend itself to great ideas for future projects.
5. You state what you see as possible improvements.
6. State the positive impact that this work has meant for the church. Your words here will stay with this person for a long time to come.

The joy that comes with working together is huge. Your church's best days will happen when people come together around well thought out plans. When they hear clear communication and execute what they understand, the church prospers, the community is helped and the lost are reached. Ministry is simply better with others. It is better "together." 🌿



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